

THE POLITICAL FRAMEWORK

certainly have appeared in the Tukhachevsky trial. Gamarnik's presence⁶⁶¹ in the Far East was frequently mentioned in the Soviet Press, the last time late in 1936, when he attended the autumn manoeuvres of the OKDVA.⁷⁰¹ One of the last pictures which Soviet newspapers published of Gamarnik showed him with the Far Eastern deputies to the Eighth Congress of Soviets.⁸ So there is no doubt that Gamarnik stood in close personal contact with some of the leading personalities of the F.E.T. It is possible that he had closer contacts with the civilian than with the military opposition in the Far East. This might explain why his fall from favour did not harm the Special Far Eastern Army directly, except for its political departments which were under Gamarnik's orders.⁹ At any rate, the Tukhachevsky-Gamarnik *affaire* did not affect Blyukher's prestige immediately. Blyukher was even one of the judges who sent Tukhachevsky and his associates to the gallows: these judges, who also included Marshal Timoshenko and Marshal Budyonny, were officially referred to as 'the flower of our glorious army'.¹⁰ In the months after the Tukhachevsky trial they served Bolshevik propaganda as examples that Stalin had not wiped out Russia's entire military leadership.

It seems that in the winter of 1937-38, Blyukher and his army reached the culminating point of their power in the Far Eastern Territory. The influence of Blyukher and his army was particularly visible in the elections which took place in December 1937 for the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., the first to be held under the new Stalin Constitution.⁶⁶⁶ Out of the nine deputies which the F.E.T. sent to the Soviet of the Union four belonged to the OKDVA, including Blyukher himself and his deputy, Mikhail Karpovich Levandovsky, who commanded the troops of the maritime region around Vladivostok. The fifth deputy, a submarine commander, represented the Pacific Fleet.⁷⁰¹ The party, the administration and the N.K.V.D.† had one deputy each. Only the ninth deputy represented the common people. He was a Stakhanovite worker in the timber industry.

When the Soviet parliament met in January 1938 Blyukher was⁷⁰¹ elected a member of its presidium. In the following month, on Red Army Day, he was awarded the 'Order of Lenin'. At the end of May a meeting of 6,500 workers and peasants nominated him as a candidate for the elections to the Supreme Soviet of the R.S.F.S.R.¹¹ Until the

* The Soviet Pacific Fleet was built up between 1932 and 1937. In the first years of the Soviet régime a Russian Pacific Fleet was as good as non-existent; until 1932 it included but one single gun-boat. Describing the situation at the time of the arrival in Vladivostok of the first Red Navy commander in the Pacific, M. V. Viktorov, *Pravda* said pointedly 'There was a commander, there was also a Pacific, but no Pacific Fleet' (*Pravda*, March 29th, 1937.) It was Viktorov's achievement to create a Soviet Pacific Fleet in a matter of four to five years. He too was eliminated in the big clean-up of 1937-38.

† The N.K.V.D., the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs, later Ministry for Internal Affairs (M.V.D.) is the ministry responsible for the Soviet police.